

PARTICIPLES IN TIME

The Development of the Perfect Tense in Swedish

(Svensk sammanfattning)

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Abstract

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This thesis is concerned with the syntactic-semantic development of the perfect tense from a construction with possessive HAVE and a tenseless participial complement. Both participles and auxiliary are assumed to have internal syntactic structure, and the different perfect-type constructions can thus be related synchronically and diachronically to each other. Cross-linguistic variation is tied to the properties of the present tense, the auxiliary, and the aspectual composition of the participle. Possessive and temporal HAVE are assumed to involve prepositional elements in languages like Swedish and English: possessive HAVE involves a possessive preposition and temporal HAVE a temporal preposition. This accounts for the difference between the two types of HAVE, as well as for the restricted semantics of the perfect in Swedish and English. Participles differ both with regard to the parts of the verb phrase they include and the presence/absence of tense and aspect.

The thesis contains a study of the early occurrences of perfect-type constructions with HAVE in Old Germanic, an investigation of the use of BE + active participle in older Swedish and of the loss of BE in Early Modern Swedish. A distinction between resultant state participles and target state participles is shown to be relevant for the analysis of the construction with BE + active or passive participle in older Swedish. The loss of BE is analysed as a change in the properties of the participial stativizer. In Present-Day Swedish, resultant state participles are formed only from verbs with an external argument, but these include also certain verbs with unaccusative behaviour.

The perfect tense is argued to have developed from a resultant state construction which expresses bounded or resultative aspect. The establishment of the perfect in the linguistic community can be observed as a change in the relative frequency of perfects and resultant state expressions over a considerable period of time.

Keywords: Scandinavian syntax, Swedish, language change, tense, aspect, perfect, participle, supine, resultative, unaccusativity, auxiliary selection

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